

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**Mountain-Prairie Region  
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**Greater Yellowstone Area Population of Grizzly Bears Remain Under Federal Protection**

*Service to Evaluate New Information Regarding Whitebark Pine as Food Source*

The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Appeals ruled on November 22, 2011 that the population of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Area, which includes northwestern Wyoming, southern Montana, and northeastern Idaho, should remain federally protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

While the ruling means that the population will remain listed for the time being, the court also affirmed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) determination that the existing regulatory mechanisms are adequate to protect grizzlies in the Yellowstone area. The Service believes the ruling provides a clear path for eventual delisting of grizzly bears in the area once the agency analyzes and clarifies the relationship between declines in whitebark pine and grizzly bear recovery.

"Our next step will be to better explain the relationship between white bark pine and grizzly bear population recovery and health in the Yellowstone area. We will work with Federal and State agencies and can also call on the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative and our management partners including the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee to help provide robust scientific information to support this effort," said Steve Guertin, the Service's Director of the Mountain-Prairie Region. "Through this cooperative effort, we will ensure the best available science regarding climate change and other stressors on grizzly bears and other wildlife species in the Northern Rockies is used to support our decision-making."

This finding for the Service recognizes the excellent work and commitment of federal and state partners to conserve grizzly bears by continuing to implement the conservation strategy developed by federal and state scientists, which incorporates intensive monitoring of the Yellowstone bears, their food sources, and their habitat.

In moving forward, the Service will carefully assemble all the biological information on the relationship between whitebark pine cone production and grizzly recovery and develop a detailed analysis of these relationships. This scientific analysis will be the basis for a new proposal to recover and delist this grizzly population.

The Service's efforts to delist grizzlies in the area dates back to March 2007 when the Service announced that the Greater Yellowstone Area population of grizzly bears was a recovered and

should be removed from the list of threatened or endangered species. However, in September 2009, the Federal District Court in Missoula issued an order vacating the delisting of the Greater Yellowstone Area grizzly population. In compliance with this order, the Yellowstone grizzly population was once again protected as a threatened population under the ESA.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit: <http://www.fws.gov>

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